

## 191 *New gospel, new evangelism*

OK, I know it's not a 'new' gospel in a sense, but it's new to me. Indeed, if theologians like NT Wright and Scot McKnight are to be believed<sup>[188-190]</sup> it's the old, original gospel, as preached by the early church. But it's new to me, and what a joy it is to have (re)found it after 50 years!

Now let me take you back to where my writing started,<sup>[1]</sup> with my friend 'Martha'. She was being urged by her church to 'share the gospel' with her friends and family, and didn't like the idea of telling them that they were sinners, facing the prospect of hell if they didn't believe in Jesus.

Does the 'new' gospel help? Yes, in spades!

Martha can continue to love and care for them – she's really good at that – and to pray for them. So then 'sharing the gospel', or 'evangelism' if you like, is sharing the person and story of Jesus, her friend whom she loves so much. What could be more natural?

To do this she needs to get deep into the Bible – the whole Bible, now we've realised the crucial importance of the OT – and to spend time with God, enjoying getting closer to her beloved Lord. And that joy she feels, in the Lord, will be seen in her face and in her life.

Anything else? Yes, I think she needs to **listen** – intently, every day and in every way. She needs to listen to God so that the Holy Spirit can prompt her as to the needs of the people she meets each day. And she needs to listen to *them*. What are *their* needs, *their* concerns? Where are *they* at in their lives. Then God will give Martha opportunities to 'share the gospel', i.e. share the story and the person of Jesus.

Can you see how totally different this is from 'sharing the gospel' according to the training that many of us had? Were you taught, 'How to turn the conversation round to the things of God'? Noooo! Listen to the Holy Spirit and listen to the person – just like Jesus did!

And please don't worry! (Martha definitely is a worrier.) God loves your loved ones **way** more than you do, and God 'does not want anyone to perish but all to come to repentance', <sup>[2 Pet 3:9]</sup> so ours is just to pray (as Jesus taught us): 'Thy will be done, thy kingdom come.'

**PS?** The Bible is God's love letter to the world, and we have this precious document (OT + NT) to share. But for perhaps 10 years, I have battled with the 'PS' of penal substitution, an idea added around the time of the Reformation. Maybe this PS is less than helpful?!

And I've now seen how another 'PS', personal salvation, has come to dominate and has become 'the gospel'. No! Personal salvation is an essential *element* of the gospel, but the gospel is about Jesus, not about me and my salvation.

As we know and love Jesus, we can share the whole love letter, the whole person, the whole story of Jesus. And we can tell that wonderful story in a million and one different ways. Let's do it!

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